

SIBALLA, THE SORCERER

"You said the rash young Flovid, as he advanced my dear Lucetta."

"Most modestly placed Lucetta upon the ground and put himself face to face with Sir Simon, and the same time drawing the sword he, further forward."

"And he said nothing as he did this, but his eyes flashed sharp defiance with those of Sir Simon. The latter, lured by Mortimer's bearing, whirled out his sword, saying—

"I do you dare lay your hand on your word at me."

"Yes, Sir, and draw it, on you as readily," replied the other, and he drew his sword as well as sheathed it, and with a single stroke, sent Sir Simon's spinning in the air, and left the wonder of that young rascal. The combat of steel was to those who in the hall like the cry of "Sword's a right" was raised, and the cry of excited spectators belted in the gentlemen of the hall.

"Sir Simon's sword had flown too far for him to regain it, and he had been trampled upon and broken by the heavy hoofs of the mob. But the young man was not so easily overcome. He was out and immediately crossed that of Mortimer. "You may disdain a boy, my back friend," said

timer to dash his sword from his grasp.

Withheld by Edward IV. for his desperate valor at the battle of Barnet, had been employed by Lord Robert, Earl of Montfort, to attend upon his wife and protect her, and, when Simon Agard, and therefore the knight, sailed, shared fairly and squarely in benefit of the young libertine.

As he spoke the above words a sharp thrust of Mortimer's sword tore away his mask of white velvet, and he beheld the face of a man of middle age, with a high forehead, and a pair of eyes that were not so blue as the sea.

"Take care, young sir," cried a voice in the ring of spectators. "That is Black Bartos; you are fighting with a devil."

"There he the black devil. I would not fear him," replied Mortimer, assailing the notorious bully with his skill and resolution which taxed the adventurer's defence sorely.

"He aims to kill," muttered Sir Mortimer, as up was forced back, inch by inch, before the

and more formidable than any he had
on.

Mortimer, at him; and, by Faustine's into him bravely!" the speaker added, as the sword of the noble knight was raised aloft, "that he was thus: clear to the butt guards through the throat of the bull."

"And then," another man uttered a cry of rage and pain, and fell heavily on the green sward. He was scarcely there when Mortimer's foot was upon his back, and he lay dead.

Sir Simon, and with astonishing quickness hurried the young baronet across the body of Sir Barton ere he could rise.

In another instant, Mortimer tore off the mask of Sir Simon, and gazed sternly into the noble's pale face.

"This was a fair and handsome face, more suitable to a woman's form than that of a man, yet without a trace of effeminacy, cunning, and treachery. His eyes were resolute and aggressive in their utterance, and his lips calm and defiant even though, while the sword was raised above his head, he knew that death was before him." Sir Barton could not raise his Sir Simon lay across his chest, and the knee of Mortimer was pressing against the middle of the young baronet, while the victor said, sternly:-

"Ask pard me, Sir Simon, of the lady you presumed to love."

A glance at the resolute face which frowned upon him told Sir Simon that the victor was not a man who would be trifled with.

"I have no pardon to ask," he flashed over him, yet he made no appeal for mercy, though his cheek and lips grew deadly pale.

"You are now crying lies and defiance," he cried, as he recovered at his conqueror. "I defy you! If you think I am a villain will apologise to a lady?"

"No," he answered, and he turned back his hand

"Do not slay him, Mortimer!" exclaimed Lauretta, who had sprung forward and grasped the powerful arm of her lover. "Do not, for my sake! Oh, it is a dreadful thing to take a human life! Spare him!"

"The Earl of Montfort!" shouted so no one in the crowd.

"Way for the Earl of Montfort!"

yielding reluctantly to the entreaties of Lanretta Mortimer with a raw pace or two from his prostrate antagonist and turned to confront one whose name he did not recall, but came with a look of defiance upon his face. He was a tall, spare, middle-aged man, with a thin, straight nose, and a pair of eyes that were as black as his coat, erect and formidable in bearing, and scowling angrily as he urged his horse straight through the dense circle of spectators, restrained up as he entered the space in the centre of the agitated throng.

His face flushed deeply red as his first glance fell upon the form of his son and Sir Roderic, then in the position of such unpleasant position.

"Lanretta, and I have this place to your protector as

they saw the marlet visage of the evil- eyed sorcerer: bearing at them as she stood near the Earl, glaring wickedly at them and eager to pounce upon them as her hapless prey; while the hideous bird of night, perched upon her tangled yellow hair, fanned the bloated cheeks of his mistress with his broad, heavy wings, and rolled his enormous eyes about him with a horrible stare.

"What men is this disgraceful scene?" demanded Lord Roger, in a harsh, disagreeable voice, as his deep-set eyes flashed rebuke upon his son and Sir Barton; and, for the moment forgetting the sorceress, "Simon Vagrain, what rout is this?"

As he repeated this inquiry his eyes for the first time fell upon the haughty, yet noble face and form of Mortimer Blair, whose dark and steady eyes were fixed earnestly upon his features.

An angry pallor spread over the sunder of crimson from

The face of the pearl as he stared, open mouthed, at the young gentleman whose fiery gaze seemed to search and pierce his soul. Lord Roger trembled in his saddle and he seemed so faint and sick, was so deathly pale, that the sorceress, whose keen eyes were suddenly turned upon him, grasped his iron-gloved hand and cried warningly,

"Take care, my lord. Beware of the evil eye!"

"Seize and bind that man! Seize him instantly! Bind him and gag him!"

"Ay, why arrest a gentleman who has merely defended his guests?"

"These proud lords think the people have no rights! He forgets that he is no born noble. Ay, and that had noble Earl Henry lived till now he'd be plain Simon Roger Vagram, the scrivener! A fig for his nobility!"

Earl Roger glared angrily about him as these cries fell hotly upon his ears, and he was about to repeat his orders fiercely when an elderly gentleman, clad

in plain brow ga b but wearing a sword and badge of honor, forced his way to Mordimer's side, while the mob shouted:—
‘Long live William Caxton! Caxton, the primer!’
William Caxton, for the gentleman was none other than that great pioneer of the press, the first that ever printed a book in England, lifted his hat, and

"Be careful, my lord, in ordering the arrest of this gentleman. He stands high in the favor of one whose letter your lordship bears in your bosom. I will vouch for his appearance when and where you command. Take care, I say, my lord. He comes from once the sea. Your lordship knows his name."

Three hearty cheers for William Caxton, whose types will light all men in England to liberty of thought," cried a deep voice from one in the crowd.

the weak ring." He knew that the noise would hurry hundreds of others to the spot to see and hear and no doubt to aid in beating down the unpopular parr and his armed followers, should occasion demand.

"Here am I, Nicholas Flame," he said, as he brandished a formidable club, heavily studded at the end with spikes of iron an inch in length. "Here am I, Nicholas Flame, torman of the printers, ready to say what Mr. Mortimer is as good as any earl I see now!"

With those bold words he stared steadily into the face of Lord Roger and seemed to dare his rage.

He recognized him with a gasp of terror, in which he shared, for, on seeing the familiar face of the man who had not been for many a long year—a man whom he had hoped was mouldering in the oil of Flanders—as one who, while Henry de Ross, the late Earl de Montfort, lived, was the foster brother of that nobleman.

Sir Barton Woolfort's wound, though bleeding freely and in the throat, had injured no vital organ, the concussion of the thrust alone having overthrown his athletic frame, but his sword had snapped as he fell, and he was now armed only with a dagger. This, however, he was ready to use—nay,

"Mark Sir Barton," whispered Sir Simon, "how my father stares at the knave with the club. He seems amazed."

The sturdy foreman of the printers did not leap

The massive club swept through the air with a single rapid sweep, and as it crashed loudly upon the steel plate which guarded the forehead of the wizard, both horse and rider fell heavily to the ground as if smitten by a thunderbolt.

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